1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

Thus Cooper with his well-armed retinue of mainlanders had made the islands safe for white men and introduced a desire for white men's goods, particularly tobacco. His retirement from Melville Island left the newly established Mission on Bathurst Island as the only source of supply for these goods. After World War I, however, another influence began to grow in importance. Large numbers of Japanese pearling boats came and anchored off the coasts of southern and southeastern Melville Island, where they traded with the local bands—the Yeimpi and Mandiimbula. These bands got tobacco and European-type food (flour, rice, tea, sugar) from the Japanese in quantities which the Catholic missionaries could not afford to provide; all the Japanese asked in return was access to young native women. Men who controlled many women—as fathers, as husbands, or as brothers—were thus in a favorable position to profit by the traffic with the Japanese.

Whereas the demands made by the Japanese on the Yeimpi and Mandiimbula for women were quite straightforward and uncomplicated, Father Gsell's demands on the bands of south Bathurst Island were somewhat more complex in their consequences. Many aspects of the old pattern of Tiwi life had to be abandoned to make them into Christians. To the missionaries, polygamy was sinful and could not be part of the new Tiwi life. Prenatal and infant bestowal had to be abolished. Marriages should be between agemates and should be arranged freely and solely by the couple involved. Such changes were the crux of Father Gsell's program, and the story of how he went about it has run in many a Sunday supplement in the cities of Australia under the title "The Bishop With 150 Wives."[6] Father Gsell did not try to convert or drastically change the behavior of the older Tiwi; he believed that they were too set in their ways. Rather, he built toward a distant day by working among the younger generation. When infant girls became widows, he purchased them from their fathers. Men with young widowed daughters and those with spare young wives sold such girls for axes, flour, tobacco, cloth, and trinkets. Such "Blackies," as they became affectionately called,[7] lived in the convent with the French (and later Australian) sisters. When such a girl reached the age of about 18, she was asked to choose one of the young single men for her husband. For his part in this excellent deal which provided him with a wife long before he would get one under the old tribal system, the young man had only to promise that he would never take another wife. Such a wedding was not a Mass, for neither party was Catholic. However, the children born of this new union were baptized and reared as Catholics. Later, a few of the girls who had been sold to Father Gsell before they were ten went through confirmation as did their youthful fiances. The first nuptial Mass between two such Tiwi took place in 1928.

[6] Father Gsell became Bishop of Darwin in 1938. He lived on in retirement to 1958, having seen in his lifetime the fulfilment of hit dream of the Tiwi as a Catholic tribe.

[7] The Tiwi today strongly resent being called "African," "Negro," or "nigger," but they do not seem to mind being called "Blacks." The term "Blackie" for a young female is in general use by Mission school girls for themselves; it is in no sense derogatory.

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 0120 Tiwi 0120

under the surface by the massive roots of the paperbarks. It was in just this sort of pool that the largest of the five crocs landed that night, was harpooned. The huge 18-foot animal dived into the roots and it took about twenty tense minutes to dislodge and dispatch him. Aside from the crocodiles the only wild life seen that night was a small and very frightened little mouse who suddenly appeared on my lap and then just as suddenly disappeared over the boat's side.

We returned to Minianapi at daybreak and the hot tea and roast goose seemed a perfect breakfast, or was it supper? It didn't matter for we were soon sound asleep.

When we finally awoke in mid-afternoon we found the camp almost deserted. "Everyone go walkabout; kill geese," Albert informed us as he and Agnes gathered more wood to build up the smouldering fire. It was very quiet in the small clearing and only the little black spots of charcoal spaced in irregular intervals on the ground were evidence that there were more than our mob in residence. The clearing itself was quite bare because it had been burned by the first comers, with the double purpose of clearing out the four-foot grass itself, and any of the various poisonous snakes which were quite likely to infest it. In back of the clearing was a thick tangle of low bushes through which ran a little foot-path. Agnes started down this path carrying a billy can and I offered to go with her, but Albert said, "No, by um by we go, him long way, him only get a little bit now." After one gets used to the pronoun "him" being used to refer to everything animal, vegetable, and mineral, this phrase is perfectly understandable: the first "him" referred to the water, the second to Agnes.

So instead of collecting water, I wandered down to the river bank where Billy-Two, Brownie, and a few of the other men, were busy skinning the crocodiles. This they did by cutting the skin first around the head, then down either side of the rows of bumps running along the spine to the tail. The skin was then carefully peeled and cut from the body. Once free it was rubbed with salt which would act as a preservative until such time as the supply boat would arrive to carry it to Darwin. There the skins would be sold to the dealer and the proceeds credited to the hunter's account or sent in the form of hard cash to the settlement for distribution. Now they were folded into bundles and loaded into the launch, and large